

**MINUTES
STATE PRESERVES ADVISORY BOARD
JULY 11, 2003**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Neil Bernstein, Chair
Robin Fortney
Kathy Gourley
Scott Moats
Timothy Sproul
Laura Jackson
Liz Christiansen

STAFF PRESENT

Daryl Howell
John Pearson

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Neil Bernstein called the meeting to order at 1:10 AM on July 11, 2003 at the Calkins Nature Center in Iowa Falls, Iowa.

APPROVE AGENDA

Add: 14a Update on White Pine Hollow by Robin Fortney
14b Budget for projects – Neil Bernstein
14c Iowa Conservationist Articles – Neil Bernstein .

Motion was made by Robin Fortney to approve the agenda as amended. Seconded by Timothy Sproul. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVE MINUTES

Motion was made by Laura Jackson to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by Kathy Gourley. Motion carried unanimously.

PRESERVE NOMINATION UPDATE

Slayton Round Barn – Draft management plan is expected to be available for October meeting.

Neil Bernstein said the Board would like to see the historical background of the property and barn, priorities for improvements to the facility, educational outreach plan, grants to pursue, vegetation along the roadside, site plan, concession policy, review of museum standards, plans for interpretation and outreach, uniqueness of facility and how will the building be maintained in case he should leave.

Glenwood Resource Center – The Director of the Department of Human Services is amenable to the drafting of a management plan for the proposed archaeological preserve at the Glenwood Resource Center, the Director also toured the center. The Director talked with the Governor and the local state Senator and they were both amenable to the idea. Kathy Gourley of the State Historical Society has offered to lead committee to draft a plan. There are six representatives serving on this committee.

Banister-McGregor Woods – The Greene County Engineer has requested a court hearing on July 14 to modify the 1991 injunction against road construction in order to access the property to conduct environmental, historical, and economical studies of alternatives for the proposed road project.

Bill McGregor agreed that he will keep the Board update of the happenings on the property.

Rock Island Preserve Addition – Discussion of newly available environmental studies (due June 30), revised management plan and lawsuit filed by City of Cedar Rapids against James Properties and Linn County over donation of land in proposed addition to Rock Island Preserve.

Neil Bernstein said that the Linn County Conservation Board is still working on a draft management plan for Rock Island. Ongoing plant studies are still being done by different individuals.

Dick Heft from the Linn County Conservation Board was unable to comment due to pending litigation status concerning the lawsuit against James Properties.

Neil Bernstein said that all studies that the board contracted have been completed. There is no formal vegetation study on the three proposed parcels or a formal management plan.

Dan Biechler, Linn County Conservation Board updated the board on the draft management plan for Rock Island Preserve. The work that Tom Cady did confirms that we have high diversity on Rock Island Preserve. The purpose for the new additions is to protect the critical resources that we do have there.

Mike Smith of the State Attorney's General Office stated that there was nothing in the lawsuit that he felt prevented us from continuing our work.

Information Only

HARTMAN RESERVE

The Black Hawk County Conservation Board proposed that a portion of Hartman Reserve be dedicated as a state preserve. A revised management plan for the proposed preserve has been submitted for Board approval.

Vern Fish, Blackhawk County Conservation Board said that they have a detailed forest management plan. Vern discussed the criteria for an annual burn.

It was agreed to include that the intent is to complete an annual burn of 3.5 acres, depending on weather conditions and staffing availability, to generate oak savanna type habitat.

Motion was made by Laura Jackson to approve the Hartman Reserve proposal with amendments. Seconded by Robin Fortney. Motion carried unanimously.

It will be recommended to the Governor that Hartman Reserve become a new state preserve.

POHL PRESERVE AT AMES HIGH PRAIRIE

A revised management plan for this preserve has been drafted by stewardship committee.

Erwin Klaas updated the Board on the status of the land at Pohl preserve. (photos were shown of the development of the land over the past years.) Part of the management plan is to remove the storm sewer. The plan has been adopted by the Ames school board on June 9th. It is on the agenda for the Nature Conservancy Board of Trustees next week. Dr. Klaas would like all three stakeholders to approve this plan before any further steps are taken.

Neil Bernstein asked about the restoration plan and recommended that the seed be taken from the surrounding prairie and not from other sources.

Motion was made by Robin Fortney to accept the revised management plan. Seconded by Laura Jackson. Motion carried unanimously.

STEELE PRAIRIE

The Cherokee County Engineer has applied for a permit to remove silt from two natural drainage ways on the preserve in order to drain water from the road ditch. The Engineer is concerned that retention of water in the road ditch is causing damage to the gravel road. DNR staff met with the Cherokee County Engineer in May to discuss possible options. The Engineer is checking with adjacent landowners to determine if they are willing to install additional soil conservation measures.

John Pearson said the road does need to be fixed but it should be done in a way that it does not affect the preserve in a negative way. The Soil and Water Conservation District indicated that they could help landowners on cost sharing on such projects. If there is no interest from the landowners, then there really is no point to move forward. We have explored alternative methods besides ditching.

Neil Bernstein said that the board should visit this site before a decision is made.

John Pearson pointed out that reed canary grass has infested the swales through the prairie possibly due to sedimentation from silt-laden run off from surrounding crop fields. Because poor drainage from the ditch and siltation in the swales are both related to sedimentation, perhaps an ecological restoration of the swales could also possibly affect the road ditch problem. This idea could be considered during a field trip by the Preserves Board.

It was agreed to hold the October Preserves Board meeting in Cherokee in order to visit the Steele Prairie site.

<i>Information Only.</i>

BASELINE STUDIES

Joe McGovern, Land Stewardship Director for the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, described the baseline data used to monitor conservation easements, a principle which could apply to state preserves. Every year individuals from the Heritage Foundation walks with the landowner through their property, this is an opportunity to discuss the management issues.

Photography, GPS coordinates, aerial photography, USGS maps and county road maps have all been helpful in determining baseline data. Baseline may take a month or two before you have samples. We monitor the terms of the conservation easements. It requires a lot to develop a conservation easement property.

John Pearson said that the DNR holds a conservation easement on 13 acres at "Becky's fen" in Fayette County.

Laura Jackson said that a conservation easement would be one way to achieve buffer zones around the preserves.

<i>Information Only.</i>

FISH FARM MOUNDS

DNR staff met with Shirley Schermer of OSA to outline actions needed at Fish Farm Mounds State Preserve, including removal of trees from mounds and to expand preserve boundary to include other mounds.

John Pearson explained the action plan for the fish farm mounds:

- 1) Remove trees from mounds.
- 2) Stop mowing in mounds area.
- 3) Re-route trail from between mounds to old roadbed.
- 4) Rebuild steps from parking lot.
- 5) Remove bench (partly on mound)
- 6) Interpretive signage
- 7) Expand preserves boundaries to include other mounds --- brush removal and re-route trail.

Motion was made by Kathy Gourley to accept the action plans that were recommended for the fish farm mounds. Seconded by Scott Moats.

WHITE PINE HOLLOW

The east entrance has been gated just beyond the parking lot adjacent to the county gravel road. This closed the ½ mile long, dead-end maintenance road, which had been in nearly impassible condition. Prior to closing, work was done on the road to repair erosion problems and low water stream crossings. The road now will be used only for DNR maintenance vehicles and as a hiking trail to the interior of the Preserve. The State Preserves Advisory Board, as early as 1982, had previously recommended that the road be closed.

Robin Fortney mentioned that the area managers are concerned about hunters potentially complaining about the gate not being open when hunting season begins. She stressed the idea that the gate should remain closed.

Motion was made by Robin Fortney to keep the gate closed to the maintenance road at all times unless the Department has the need to use the road. Seconded by Laura Jackson. Motion carried unanimously.

PRAIRIE SEED HARVEST

Bill Johnson, IDNR Prairie Seed Team Leader, is requesting permission to harvest seed from the prairie preserves.

(a handout was given to board members regarding the number of species throughout the North, Central and South regions)

Project Goal

The intent of this project is to harvest native ecotype prairie seed from state preserves and in turn, plant 100% of seed collected on North Central Correctional Facility at Rockwell City or on state-owned or public land. The availability of such seed is a deterrent factor in current efforts to plant local ecotypes on a large scale. By harvesting from preserves, the hope is to establish several local seed sources around the state. These areas will eventually be harvested to further perpetuate the availability and use of native Iowa seed sources.

Application for Harvest

a) Request is for collecting native ecotype prairie seed from all state prairie preserves.

b) Responsible party for overseeing the project is Bill Johnson, Wildlife Biologist for the Seed Harvest Team, Southwest District, Wildlife Bureau.

c) Seed Harvest Team and inmates from the Department of Corrections will harvest the various species. The Seed Harvest Team and inmates from the Department of Corrections will do planting of the seed.

d) Seed will be harvested by hand.

e) Seed species to be harvested would include all grasses and forbs occurring on the site. We will be concentrating on the early blooming species.

f) Seed collected will be planted during the same field season as harvest – time and weather permitting. We have started 40+ different species for each of the ecotype zones.

g) We are establishing production plots for 3 zones in Iowa. All seed will initially go to these production plots. Also, production fields are being established and the remaining seed will be incorporated with ecotype grasses into these production fields.

<i>Motion was made by Robin Fortney to approve the harvesting of prairie seed as needed. Seconded by Timothy Sproul. Motion carried unanimously.</i>

GEOCACHING

An emerging outdoor recreational activity involves the use of hand-held GPS (Geographic Positioning System) instruments to search for small caches

(generally jars with inexpensive gifts) whose geographical coordinates are posted on websites. A DNR staff committee regards this as benign from of recreation on state lands in need of modest regulation, but recommended consideration of this issue by the Preserves Board.

Daryl Howell mentioned that the Park personnel did not want to have more than three or four at each park and that proper signage should be used informing the public of what the caches are.

Kathy Gourley and Robin Fortney agreed that this is a great opportunity to promote the preserves, educate people of the outdoors and enjoy the parks.

Scott Moats expressed his concern about the preserves sponsoring this event, but maybe a good opportunity for other wildlife areas and state and county parks.

Laura Jackson suggested making a list of places that are sensitive and off limits.

<i>Information Only.</i>

RESEARCH REQUESTS

It was agreed by the Board members to act on all research requests as one.

Bluffton Fir Stand – Kevin Potter of North Carolina State University requests permission to collect samples of branch tips of balsam fir.

Bixby – Wendy Bower, working for the Iowa Geological Survey under Bob Libra and others, requested staff permission to dis two 6-inch diameter, 22 inch depth holes to obtain soil samples for U.S. Geological Survey as part of national baseline study of metals in soils. Because study needed to start prior to the Board meeting, staff permission was granted after consulting with Kathy Gourley and Shirley Schermer.

Steele Prairie – Benjamin Montgomery of the University of Michigan requested staff permission to study leafy spurge infestation at Steele Prairie and to temporarily place potted plants of native prairie species in preserve. Because study needed to start before next Board meeting, staff permission was granted after consulting with Scott Moats, Laura Jackson and Neil Bernstein.

Cayler Prairie - Embere Hall, a graduate student at ISU requested permission from staff to conduct a study of the success of songbird nesting in grasslands and wetlands in northwest Iowa. Because the study needed to be initiated prior to the next Board meeting staff approval was granted.

Prairie Preserves – Jessica Skibbe, an ISU graduate student, requested permission to collect information about the butterfly communities on five prairie preserves. Staff permission was granted because the study needed to be started prior to the July Board meeting.

Hayden Prairie – Donald Wright, a Lepidoptera expert from Ohio has again requested permission to collect microlepidoptera from Hayden Prairie. Mr. Wright has collected on preserves several times in the past and has always provided species lists and other information to the DNR. Staff permission was granted, as this is a continuation of previous surveys.

Motion was made by Robin Fortney to approve the research requests. Seconded by Kathy Gourley. Motion carried unanimously.

Neil Bernstein suggested that as we communicate with each individual that we request the proposals for each of these requests earlier.

NEW NOMINATIONS

Sand Woods – Landowners Jim & Karole Fuller, Dick & Deb Baker, Bill & Judith Klink, and Art Bettis and Brenda Nations are interested in investigating state preserves status for their 100-acre property in Cedar County. The predominantly natural vegetation consists of black oak forest, wet swales, and prairie openings on an Aeolian dune landscape on the east side of the Cedar River near the town of Cedar Bluff. Visited by John Pearson on May 16.

Tom Madsen, undergrad from the University of Iowa nominated the following sites and made a PowerPoint presentation on Sandy Beach and Lake MacBride.

MacBride and Coralville sites – Two sites in Johnson County have been suggested as potential state preserves by Iowa City naturalists Tom Madsen, Diana Horton, Connie Mutel, and Mary Sue Bowers: an isolated portion of Lake MacBride State Park (DNR land) and a portion of the Sandy Beach Recreation Area on Coralville Reservoir (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land). The Lake MacBride site is a forested area containing rare plants; about 2 miles to the northwest, the Sandy Beach site contains sand deposits, wetlands, limestone outcrops and rare plants. Not yet visited by preserves staff.

Neil Bernstein suggested that we expand our focus from Tom's sites to also include sandy sites in Hawkeye Wildlife Area that are rich in reptiles and sand prairie plants.

Tom Madsen said that the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers has encouraged us to continue on.

OPEN DISCUSSION

14a - Robin Fortney gave an update on the damaged trees (oak tatters) at White Pine Hollow preserve. The cause is still unknown. About forty trees have been tagged so they can be monitored over the next years.

Laura Jackson said that there needs to be record of what's been done at the preserves.

John Pearson said that Paul Tauke has been receiving phone calls from loggers asking if they can cut down the damaged trees.

It was agreed to leave the damaged trees for further research.

John Pearson said that DNR forester Steve Pennington requests permission to collect seeds from trees in state preserves as part of new genetic improvement program at the State Nursery. It was also agreed that Steve Pennington will get back to the Board with information on the findings at White Pine Hollow.

Motion was made by Laura Jackson to approve this research. Seconded by Robin Fortney. Motion carried unanimously.

John Pearson went through the list of the powers and duties of the Preserves Board.

14b - Neil Bernstein said that the research projects have funding.

Daryl Howell mentioned that we did receive the funding for agreement with the Heritage Foundation for the preserves study group. Robin Fortney will be representing the Board for this committee.

Julie Sparks is still planning to run a column about the Preserves in the Conservationist Magazine.

Robin Fortney requested John to create a list of potential preserves.

BOARD TOUR

The Board was given a tour by Rod Scott of the Slayton Round Barn at 10:00 AM this morning. The round barn is located at the intersection of Georgetown Road and County Highway S33 on the west edge of Iowa Falls. The tour was open to the public.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Laura Jackson to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Robin Fortney. Motion carried unanimously.

With no further business to come before the State Preserves Advisory Board, Chairperson Neil Bernstein adjourned the meeting at 4:45 PM on July 11, 2003

The next State Preserves Advisory Board meeting will be held on October 4 in Cherokee County.

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